

Elizabeth Sumner

Mr. *Bacon's*
S E R M O N

Preached the next Lord's Day after his

I N S T A L M E N T.

Mr. Brown's

S E R M O N



Preached the next day after his

I N S T A L M E N T.

A
S E R M O N

Preached *September 29th* 1771.

By JOHN BACON, A. M. <

The next Lord's Day after he was

I N S T A L E D,

A N D T H E R E V E R E N D

Mr. J O H N H U N T, A. M.

O R D A I N E D,

C O L L E A G U E P A S T O R S

O F T H E

S O U T H C H U R C H I N B O S T O N.

B O S T O N : Printed and Sold by KNEELAND and
ADAMS, next to the Treasurer's Office in Milk-
Street. MDCCLXXII.

A

W E R M O N

Preached September 29, 1777.

By John B. R. M.

The next Lord's Day after he was

INSTALLED

AND



M. J. M.

ORDAINED

COLLEAGUE PASTORS

OF THE

SOUTH CHURCH IN BOSTON.

BOSTON: Printed and sold by Kneeland and
Hosmer, next to the Printing Office in Park
Street, 1800.

S E R M O N.

JEREMIAH 23. 28.

The Prophet that hath a Dream, let him tell a Dream; and he that hath my Word, let him speak my Word faithfully: what is the Chaff to the Wheat? saith the Lord.

W E have lately, my Friends, some been spectators, and some parties more immediately concerned in one of the most solemn and important transactions in life. This has given occasion for my making choice of the words which have now been read for the subject of the present discourse.

When the great Apostle of the Gentiles considered the nature of the work, and the effects that were occasioned by the preaching the gospel of Christ, it made him cry out, *Who is sufficient for these things?* And I doubt

I doubt not but that every minister of the gospel, who has any due sense of the nature of his office, is habitually disposed to adopt the same language. What abundant reason we have for this, every one must be convinced who will read with a becoming attention the chapter which contains our text. In this chapter, the most tremendous woes are denounced against unfaithful pastors, who, instead of watching over, and feeding, destroy and scatter the sheep of God's pasture. For this, he threatens to visit upon them the evil of their doings; than which, a more heavy curse is not contained in all the book of God. And as for those prophets that prophecy lies, and think to cause his people to forget his name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, God threatens to feed such prophets with wormwood, and to give them the water of gall to drink. And in the words of my text, he gives this simple, plain, but important direction: *The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.* The prophet who has dreamed, is at liberty, if he see fit, to tell his dream; but then let him tell it, only as a dream, and not attempt to impose it as the command of God.

By a dream here, we may understand, the inventions, fancies, and carnal reasonings of men in general. These however plausible, when brought in competition with divine revelation, are empty and vain: And therefore not to be imposed as the oracles of God; nor any farther received, than as they appear to be thereby supported. All human conjectures about matters of faith are but idle dreams, *in the multitude of which, there are also divers vanities.* But he that has the word of God is to declare that in simplicity and truth;

truth ; neither adding thereto, nor diminishing therefrom ; nor mixing it at all with his own inventions. *What is the chaff to the wheat ?* What have these to do with each other ? What are all the reasonings of men, compared with the pure and uncorrupted word of God ? And what have these to do in the place of divine revelation ?

Although the words of our text were spoke with immediate respect to the prophets and public instructors in the *Jewish church* ; yet, with equal propriety may they be applied to the ministers of the gospel in all ages of the *christian church*.

We shall therefore, without any further explanation of the words, consider them as expressive of the following doctrine, viz.

Those who are ministers of the gospel, and employed as teachers in the church of God, are to teach *his word faithfully*.

The method which we propose in handling this doctrine, is—

I. To show when ministers may be said to teach God's word faithfully.

II. Offer some reasons why they should teach thus.

We are, first, to show when ministers may be said to teach God's word faithfully. Before we proceed to speak positively to this head, it may not be improper for us briefly to mention some instances, wherein it may be said, that they do not teach in this manner. And,

1. When

1. When they teach error, or things inconsistent with each other, it may be said, they do not teach God's word faithfully. The word of God is the word of truth: He is not a man that he should lie, or ever be under the least mistake: His word is one harmonious system of perfectly consistent truth. It is evident from the very nature of things, that it must necessarily be so. For to suppose that God could be inconsistent with himself, would be to suppose him very imperfect: For nothing can be a greater imperfection than inconsistency: And to suppose this of God, would be to suppose him not to be God. It is a strong argument in favour of divine revelation, that in all it's parts, it is perfectly consistent and harmonious. Could any part of God's word be proved to be false, or inconsistent with itself, this would effectually overthrow the whole: Of this, infidels are thoroughly apprized: and hence, have always exerted their malice in attempting to fasten inconsistencies and absurdities on divine revelation. But in all their attempts, they have hitherto failed: The word of God, amidst all the assaults of earth and hell, continues to rest on the unshaken foundation of consistent truth. This is an essential characteristic of divine revelation: And therefore, whenever men advance error, or things inconsistent with each other, it may then be said, they do not teach God's word faithfully.

2. Ministers may be said not to teach God's word faithfully, when they designedly keep back any part of his counsel: And this, whatever their motives may be, whether from a desire to render themselves popular and agreeable, from fear of displeasing men, breaking the peace of the church, lessening it's numbers, or any other prudential considerations: whatever; if for the sake of these, they wilfully shun to declare the *whole counsel of God*, they fall under this condemnation.

It

It is, no doubt, a duty incumbent on ministers, to study the tempers and dispositions of their people, and to endeavour, by all means, consistent with that fidelity which they owe to their great Lord and Master, to render themselves agreeable to those with whom they are so nearly connected. They are to make it their study not to give any offence, but to be gentle among their people, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. They are to behave themselves holily, and justly, and unblameably; and to make it appear by their conduct, that they are indeed affectionately desirous of them, and by these means they are to strive to secure their affections. This is not only lawful, but a duty incumbent on ministers.

The peace of the church is also to be considered as a matter of very great importance, for which ministers should labour and pray, and in many instances, intirely give up their own private interests and inclinations: For this, they should be willing to spend and be spent. But these, how desirable and important soever, are not to stand in competition with the counsel of God. This must be declared, let what may be the consequence. To temporise in God's cause, however great the temptation, is what his soul abhors: Nor can he who does thus, be said, faithfully to teach God's word. Again,

3. We may be said not to teach God's word faithfully, when in our preaching we exhibit little or no important matter. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* God, in his holy word, has made a revelation of his own character: If therefore we preach agreeable to this word, we cannot fail to exhibit truths that are important. It is possible that

we may use orthodox ; yea, scripture words and phrases in such a manner as to convey no important truth, but error. Hence we read of some, who wrested the *scriptures* to their own destruction. When this is the manner of our preaching, we may be said, not to teach God's word faithfully. Whatever words or phrases we use, unless we do it in such a manner, as may tend to convey truth to the mind of the hearer, and to feed the people of God with knowledge and understanding, we are not faithful teachers of his word.

4. When we set up the traditions of men, in distinction from the word of God, we go counter to the direction given in our text. When we make the long custom of the church our rule, or the example of great and good men, not divinely inspired, we may then be said, not faithfully to teach God's word. This is, at best, no other than teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men ; and is directly opposed to that important direction of our blessed Lord ; *Call no man master upon earth : For One is your master, even Christ*. The inspired Apostle himself would be followed, no farther than he was a follower of Christ. When once we begin to set up men for the rule of our faith, we can never determine where to stop. We should soon have as many rules as there are men : And all these, in many instances, directly opposed, one to the other. This, instead of granting the least assistance to our enquiries after truth, would involve us in an endless maze of uncertainty and confusion.

But it is time that we pass on to say positively ; ministers may be said to teach God's word faithfully, when they teach,

1. Nothing

7. Nothing but the pure doctrines that are therein revealed. Within the compass of divine revelation, all our doctrines are to be included. Whenever we surpass these sacred limits, we always run counter to that solemn injunction, Prov. 30. 6. *Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.* The ministers of the gospel are ambassadors for Christ: They come to the people in his name; and he requires them to deliver his message; and therefore, in adding thereto, we betray our trust, and act the part of those wicked Prophets, who say, *The Lord saith, albeit, he hath not spoken.*—None will suppose, from what is here asserted, that the minister of the gospel is to confine himself to the express words of divine revelation: No; this he must study, explain, and apply. From this sacred treasure, he must bring forth things, both new and old. Fidelity in this respect, requires that all our doctrines and instructions be agreeable to the revealed will of God—that they be derived therefrom, and supported thereby. The Bible is a summary of all the doctrines which God requires us to believe, and of all the duties he calls us to perform: And therefore, whenever we teach for doctrines, or inculcate for duties, things which are not therein revealed, we affect to be wise above what is written, and hereby most awfully betray that sacred trust which is committed to us. In that sacred volume of divine revelation which God has been pleased to put in our hands, there is neither redundancy, nor defect: But like it's glorious author, is every way perfect. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the Lord is pure, making wise the simple,* Psal. 19. 7. This leads to observe,

2. For ministers faithfully to teach God's word, implies, that they keep back nothing, but declare his

whole counsel, as in his word, he has revealed it. We have before observed, that he, who from any prudential, or selfish considerations whatever, withholds any part of God's counsel, cannot be said, faithfully to teach his word. Directly opposite to this, is that conduct required in our text. Our blessed Lord, while he tabernacled here in flesh, has set a perfect example of fidelity in this work. He was a teacher sent from God, and taught the way of God in truth. No temptations, no dangers or difficulties that lay in his way, could induce him to withhold any part of that counsel of God, which it became him to reveal. As he came to bear witness to the truth, so he fulfilled his testimony in the face of all opposition. Hence he sustains the character of the *faithful and true witness*. Before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good profession, and sealed his testimony with his heart's blood. When all men forsook him, even his own disciples, and left him alone, surrounded with enemies on every side, he remained steadfast and faithful, even unto death. And herein he has set us an example, that we should follow his steps. And when he had finished his work, and was about to ascend up on high, he gave particular direction to his disciples, and in them, to his ministers in every age of the church, to teach all nations to observe *all things*, whatsoever he had commanded them. And thus they went forth, and in the face of a frowning world, at the expence of all that was dear in life, proclaimed on the house-top whatever their Lord and master had revealed to them in secret. And when hated, persecuted, and forbid to teach in the name of Jesus, they, instead of giving way to such human injunctions, reply, with that holy boldness which became their office, *Whither we ought to obey God rather than man, judge ye*. They chose rather to be accounted as the filth of the world, and the

the off-scouring of all things ; yea, to be destitute, afflicted, tormented, than to be deficient in declaring the counsel of God. Thus Paul, when taking leave of his Ephesian brethren, with whom he had been labouring in word and doctrine, takes them to record of his fidelity therein, by reminding them of the manner in which he had discharged his office. Acts 20. 18, &c. *Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which beset me by the lying in wait of the Jews : And how I kept back nothing that was profitable.—Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. No temptations, or troubles ; no dangers or deaths, to which he may be exposed, will induce the faithful minister of the gospel to withhold any part of the counsel of God : But he will set his face like a flint, to declare the whole ; though it should be at the expence of fortune and friends ; yea, of life itself. But none of these things move me, says Paul, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.**

3. That

* I trust none will conclude from what I have said, that I mean to assert, that great wisdom and care is not requisite, both as to the order and manner of conveying the difficult and mysterious doctrines of the gospel to the minds of others. The plainest and easiest truths should doubtless be first exhibited, as introductory to those which are more intricate and sublime. I am ready to confess, it would be highly improper for a minister to insist chiefly upon the deep things of God, while his audience in general are but poorly acquainted with the first principles of his holy oracles. Spiritual food should be imparted in such order, manner, and measure, as may be best

3. That the word of God be faithfully taught, it is necessary that the truths therein contained should be set in a clear, natural, and convincing point of view. One great design of preaching is to inform the understanding and fix conviction upon the conscience. Yea, it may be asserted, that men are benefited by the word no farther than it has this effect. For it is only in the view of truth that there is, or can be any right exercises of heart. Men of itching ears may be highly delighted, and think themselves greatly edified by the agreeable harmony of meer sounds; while at the same time no important truth is conveyed to the mind. But fidelity in dispensing God's word, by no means admits of gratifying a taste like this. When men are thus disposed to settle on their lees, and to be lulled and soothed into ease and security; then especially, it becomes the watchman, instead of singing a requiem, to blow the trumpet, and sound an alarm. And in order that the gospel trumpet may give a distinct and certain sound, it is necessary that truth should be set in a clear and convincing point of view,—that it should be held up in all it's connection and dependence.

The word of God, like a chain of various links, is one harmonious system of closely and inseparably connected doctrines; any one link of which, being broke, the whole chain is dissolved. There is a certain connection between one divine truth and another, which, unless

best calculated to enlarge and strengthen, and not surfeit and overwhelm the minds, of honest and industrious enquirers. Ministers, in the course of their preaching, should declare the counsel of God, in the most advantageous manner. In other words, they should exert themselves for the greatest advancement of divine knowledge, in all it's branches, among men: Guarding, at all times, against that unworthy conduct, mentioned by the Apostle, 2 Tim. 3. 7. *Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

unless duly attended, we can have no consistent scheme of religion ; but shall always grope in the dark, and blunder on in a perpetual round of inconsistency and confusion. Thus the gospel of Christ, for instance, or the doctrine of a crucified Savior, can never be preached consistently, or perceived to be a manifestation of the divine wisdom, goodness, or any perfection whatever, unless it be taken in connection with the law of God. The glory of the gospel depends on the goodness and glory of the law. If the law was not perfectly right, holy, and good ; what Christ has done in obeying, and thereby doing honour to it, consenting to be made a curse, that so he might open a way, by which free grace might flow out, and sinners be delivered from the curse which the law denounces ; I say, on supposition, that the law was not perfectly right, holy, and good, all that Christ has done and suffered, must be intirely needless ; and if so, instead of being a display of divine perfection, must be a display of the greatest imperfection : It would open to our view the most horrid scene of folly and injustice. For to make such a sacrifice, as that of the Son of God to a law that was in itself unequal, or bad, would be an abomination infinitely greater than that of the heathen, in making their children to pass through the fire to moloch.

Hence we see what a necessary connection there is between the glory of the gospel, and the glory of the divine law. The sum of the law is, to love God with all the heart, and that on the penalty of damnation. But there can be no glory in such a law as this, but on supposition of God's infinite, absolute worthiness to be loved, for what he is in himself : I say, *absolute worthiness, for what he is in himself* : For it cannot be a duty to love any being that is in himself
 unlovely :

unlovely : Nor can there be any glory, or excellence in a law which requires love to such a Being, whatever that being may be to me : Much less, can that be a glorious law, which requires perfect love to such a Being, and that on such an infinite penalty.

Hence we see that the doctrine of God's infinite worthiness to be loved supremely, for what he is in himself, is a fundamental principle in the christian religion. If this be false, the whole gospel is overthrown. For if God, *for what he is*, be not infinitely worthy of supreme love, there can be no glory in that law which requires this ; and if there be no glory in that law which requires this, then, as we have already proved, there can be no glory in the gospel of Christ. Again ; from the infinite worthiness of God to be loved perfectly, we infer the infinite evil that there is in sin : And from the infinite evil of sin, necessarily follows the utter impossibility of the sinner's doing that, which, in point of worthiness, may influence in the least towards his acceptance with God. And this, again, lays the foundation for the necessity of the Mediator's work, in order to open a way for the honourable exercise of free, sovereign grace. These are things at which we can only hint. But from this brief sketch, we may easily perceive the inseparable connection there is between one divine truth and another, and how absolutely necessary it is, that it be held up in all it's connection and dependence. The doctrine of God's own absolute worthiness of supreme love, and perfect obedience, is the foundation on which the whole system of christianity is founded. If this principle is once overthrown, the whole gospel is intirely demolished : But while this is maintained in all it's connection, the gates of hell will never be able to prevail against it. And here, I must just observe, that as
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the doctrine of God's infinite worthiness to be loved supremely, for his own absolute perfection, is the foundation, on which the whole system of christianity appears to be built ; so all true religion in the hearts of men begins with this. From this source, springs every christian exercise that is agreeable to truth.

4. He that would teach God's word faithfully must oppose error, vindicate the doctrines of divine revelation against the aspersions which are thrown upon them by men of corrupt minds, and endeavour by sound reasoning to stop the mouths of gainayers. The word of God is a sacred treasure which he has, in a special manner, committed to his ministers ; to guard and defend which, is no small part of their work. Christians in general are commanded to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Jude 3. *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.* But more especially is this a work which ministers are called to engage in. Although this is a part of our work, in itself disagreeable, yet when the cause of truth, the interest of religion, and the honour of God call for it, we, although striplings, are to gird on the harness, and come forth to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord, against the mighty. Jeremiah was made a man of strife, and a man of contention for the cause of God, Jer. 15. 10. *Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth.* Paul says of himself, that he was set for the defence of the gospel, which implies that he was called to contend for it. Philip. 1. 7. *Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch*

as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. And in verses 16, 17. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. Hence the character of a gospel minister is often represented by that of a soldier, whose life is a life of warfare, 2 Tim. 2. 3, 4. Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Nor is the minister of the gospel to oppose infidels only, and those who are open and avowed enemies to religion in general; but when the cause of truth requires, he is so far to deny himself, as in the spirit of meekness, boldly to contend with those who are most near and dear to him in the bonds of christian love; even with his own brethren and fathers in the work of the gospel ministry: For this, the laudable example of Paul is sufficient authority. When Peter, who was of much older standing than himself, and who had the honour of having been with Christ from the beginning of his public ministry; when he appeared to deviate from the simplicity of the gospel, and for fear of displeasing the Jews, dissembled with respect to his conduct towards the Gentiles; Paul, who was the youngest of all the apostles, like a true gospel hero, stood up and publicly contended with him. See Gal. 2. 11, &c. *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Bar-*
nabas

abas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, If thou being a Jew livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews : why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews ? I would not be understood to insinuate that the minister of the gospel should be of a contentious spirit : Far from this. It is a duty incumbent on all christians, as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men, especially with those who are of the household of faith : More especially is this a duty incumbent on those who are made overseers, and required to be examples to the flock in all holy meekness, love and forbearance. All that I intend is this, that whenever the cause of truth requires us to speak, no respect, either to persons or characters, may induce us to hold our peace, and refuse to contend for that faith which was once delivered to the saints. All the doctrines revealed in the gospel are to be maintained, whoever may be the opposers of them.

5. He that would teach God's word faithfully, must be an industrious and impartial enquirer after truth. He must be careful to divest himself of prejudices of every kind, and be disposed to judge of things as they are in themselves, and as they appear to be revealed in the oracles of God. He must not rest satisfied with what he already knows, but must daily enquire after new truth. He must not be contented with only finding out that which lies on the surface ; but he must dig deep, and search diligently : He must bring forth out of his treasure things new, as well as old. Mat. 13. 52. *Then said he unto them, every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his*

treasure things new and old. Many important truths, like the richest treasures, lie deep, and to indolent minds, quite out of sight. Hence that exhortation, Prov. 2. 3, 4, 5. *Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding : If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her, as for hid treasure ; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.* Agreeable hereto is that important exhortation of an aged apostle to his son Timothy, 1 Epist. 13. 14, 15. *Until I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.* The holy scriptures afford perpetual new discoveries of important truth : These, like the waters of the sanctuary, are a great deep, in which every devout student will find, the farther he proceeds, the deeper they grow : And after all that in this life, we shall be able to find out, it will doubtless be the business of eternity to search into the sacred mysteries herein contained.

Perhaps an objection may here arise in the minds of some (which seems to be too common at this day) that it is not profitable, or becoming for ministers to meddle with those doctrines of divine revelation which appear to be mysterious, hard to be understood, and which have long been controverted by wise and good men :—That there are plain things enough for them to insist upon, without perplexing the minds of their people with matters of nice speculation.

To such an objection, it may be replied ; does not this affected show of modesty carry in it the highest degree of arrogance ? Is it not a most impious impeachment

peachment of the divine character ? And a making ourselves to be wiser than God ? It is evident that God has thought it best that these doctrines should be taught ; otherwise, to what purpose can it be that he has revealed them ? We cannot conceive why God should reveal doctrines, which when revealed, he never designed should be studied and taught ; unless we embrace that detestable doctrine of the Papists, that the scriptures are designed only for the learned, and are not fit to be in the hands of the common people. Nay, they who make this objection, seem to carry the matter much higher than the Papists do : For they suppose there are certain things in divine revelation, which are not only unfit for the common people to concern themselves about ; but unfit, even for the learned themselves. Had God left it to the discretion of his ministers to determine what doctrines are fit to be taught, and what are not so ; there might, perhaps, be some apparent weight in the objection ; but since he has determined otherwise, it must certainly be a most horrid act of unfaithfulness, and impiety for them to assume to themselves this prerogative. God has put into the hands of his ministers, his written word, which contains a summary of the doctrines they are to teach, and enjoins it upon them to preach *that* word. He says to them, as to his prophet of old, Jonah 3. 2. *Arise, go unto Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.* Ministers are God's messengers to the people ; he has given them their errand ; and what daring presumption must it be in them to take upon themselves to determine, what a part of their errand is fit to be delivered, and what is not fit ! Should we not look on him, as an arrogant, unfaithful servant, who should behave in this manner towards us ? If all doctrines are to be shunned, or rejected, which imply things that we are not able, at present,

present, fully to comprehend, or which appear to us to involve mysteries, that are inexplicable, or which have been controverted by those who have been reputed wise and good men ; alas ! what will become of the christian religion ? Certainly on this principle, it becomes us immediately to reject our present system, and to set about laying another foundation, than that which is laid. On this supposition, there are scarce any doctrines, but what must be laid aside. All the distinguishing doctrines of the christian religion imply mysteries, which perhaps we shall never be able, fully to comprehend. If this be a sufficient reason for not embracing, or insisting on doctrines that are revealed, we must immediately give up divine revelation, and at once turn infidels. Who will pretend fully to comprehend the eternity, or infinite perfection of God, or the doctrine of the trinity ? But shall we reject these doctrines, or shun ever to insist upon them ? May God forbid that such sentiments as these should ever prevail among us ! If the ministers of the gospel are to be thus restrained ;—if the word of God is to be thus bound, has not every Israelite awful reason to tremble for the ark ?

6. To teach God's word faithfully implies, that we keep up the distinct characters of the saint and the sinner ;—that we make a difference between the clean and the unclean ;—the precious and the vile. This is a matter of very great importance, and demands the most careful attention of every one, who undertakes to dispense the word of life. Without this distinction be duly kept up, we shall be in the utmost danger on the one hand, of wounding the sheep of God's pasture, and on the other, of building up sinners on a false foundation, to their own everlasting ruin. We are *rightly to divide the word of truth, and to give to every one his*

his portion in due season. But this, it is impossible we should do, unless we keep up the distinct characters of the saint, and the sinner. To the broken hearted penitent believer, whose heart is reconciled to the divine character and government, and consequently opposed to sin, we are to apply the gracious promises of the gospel, which are all summed up in this, that they shall be *like Christ*. But to the impenitent, and unbelieving, we are to apply, not one divine promise, but all the curses of a broken law. We are not to speak peace to any, but those to whom God speaks peace. If from too great a tenderness to awakened sinners, we attempt to feed them with children's bread, we do it at our peril. This is to sew pillows to all armholes, and to strengthen the hands of the impenitent, that they should not return from their wicked way. Wo unto us, if we thus handle the word of the Lord deceitfully. Again,

7. To teach God's word faithfully implies, it's being done from right views, and to right ends. He cannot be a faithful teacher of God's word, whose heart is not right with him. Fidelity in any business respects the heart. Nor would he be deemed, by men, a *faithful* servant, who only from a principle of fear, or some private selfish views, should ever so punctually perform the external part of his master's commands, if at the same time it was known, that he was in heart an enemy to his master, and was desiring, and seeking opportunity to destroy his master's interest. It is true, we are to judge of men by their fruits, and are required to conduct towards them, according to their external conduct. We have no way by which to form a judgment of their hearts, but from what appears outwardly; and therefore, we are to deem them faithful, who make a profession of fidelity, and whose lives and conversation externally correspond with their profession.

feffion. But it is not so with God, he seeth not as man seeth : *For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.* Nor can any thing be done faithfully in the sight of the heart-searching God, which is not done *from the heart.* When the language of our external conduct contradicts that of our hearts, this is hypocrisy, which is directly opposed to fidelity. God requires that whatever we do, be done with a view to his glory. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* And if the glory of God be the end to which we are required to act in all the common affairs of life ; especially must it be so in that important work of teaching his word. In this we are ambassadors for God : Our business has a more immediate respect to him, as we herein negotiate with souls in his name : And therefore, it is especially required of us, that we herein act with a view to his glory. And as this end is in a peculiar manner obtained in the salvation of souls, so this must be the great thing at which we are to aim. We are set to watch for souls, and we are to watch, as those who must give an account. It is not enough for us, that the doctrines we deliver are agreeable to truth ; (for the truth may be held in unrighteousness) it is not enough that in words, we declare the whole counsel of God ; but we must declare it faithfully ; we must declare it from our hearts,—from right views, and to right ends. The glory of God, and the salvation of souls, are the great things which we are constantly to keep in view. I add once more,

8. In teaching God's word faithfully is implied, that we improve all opportunities of instructing. We are to teach, not only in public, but in private. Thus did the apostles, Acts 5. 42. *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach*
Jesus

Jesus Christ.—Thus Paul fulfilled the ministry which he had received, as appears from his solemn appeal to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Acts 20. 18, and 20. *Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons—And how I kept back nothing that might be profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house. And thus, in the most solemn manner, he charges Timothy to preach the word. 2 Tim. 4. 1, 2. I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

But in order to our being faithful teachers of God's word, it is necessary that we teach it, not only in our public and private discourses, in the manner that has been already pointed out; but we must teach it in our practice: We must live the doctrines which we preach: We must act them out, so that our people may see what they are when reduced to practice. Example has generally a more powerful influence than words. If therefore, by our example we pull down, what by our doctrines we build up, we can have no reason to expect that our preaching will have any great effect, unless it be to wound the true sheep and lambs of Christ's flock, to harden sinners in their wickedness, to strengthen the hands of evil doers, and to bring dishonour on that holy religion, which it is our business to recommend. Indeed these are the awful effects which the wicked example of ministers has a natural tendency to produce. Hence that exhortation of Paul to Timothy, 1 Epist. 4. 12. *Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word,*

word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Thus we have endeavoured to show, in a number of particulars, when ministers may be laid to teach God's word faithfully. We pass on, and say the next thing.

II. To offer some reasons, why they should teach thus. These are many and important: But the time will permit us here, only to hint at a few. As,

1. This is agreeable to the sovereign appointment and will of God. *And he that bath my word, let him speak my word faithfully,* says our text. Ministers, as we have already observed, are ambassadors for God: He has an absolute right to assign them their embassy, which he has expressly done: And therefore it must be infinitely criminal in them to go beside the instructions which he has given. *Necessity* is laid upon them; yea, we unto them if they teach not that very doctrine, and in that very manner which God has commanded.

2. All other teaching, compared with this, is mean and trifling. *What is the chaff to the wheat?* saith the Lord. All the philosophy, and subtil reasonings of the wise and learned men of this world, compared with the simple, plain, and uncorrupted word of God, are no more than the worthless chaff, to the pure wheat. The word of God is the word of life: Hereby men are made wise unto salvation, *and the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.* We may gratify the curiosity, and please the corrupt tastes of men, by teaching according to the wisdom of this world; but this is foolishness with God: It is not food for the sheep of Christ's pasture: If they are thus

thus fed, they will dwindle and starve : It is the voice of Christ they are to hear : Their spiritual tastes require spiritual food : The sincere milk of the word is that by which they grow, and by every word of God, they live. *I by words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of mine heart,* Jer. 15. 16.

3. This is the only way, in which we may expect the blessing of God, without which all our labours will be in vain. *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it : Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.* And to expect that God will succeed our work, while we go beside the directions which he has given, would be the most daring presumption. Christ, in that parting charge which he gave to his apostles, connects the promise of his gracious presence with their teaching all things whatsoever he had commanded. Mat. 28. 20. *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : And lo, I am with you alway.* And as for those prophets which prophesy contrary to what God has directed, he says of them, as in the 32d verse of the context ; *Behold I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness, yet I sent them not, nor commanded them : Therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.*

4. The minister, who shall be found to have been thus faithful, will be approved of Christ in that solemn day when he will reckon with all his servants. The faithful minister will, in that day, be able to give up his account with joy ; and Christ will say to him, *Well done, good and faithful servant : Thou hast been*

faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. And O! of what solemn importance will it then appear, that we be able to render a good account of our stewardship, and thus receive the approbation of our Judge!

5. God has given great encouragement to fidelity in this solemn and important work, by the many great and precious promises which he has made to those who shall be found so doing. He has promised, that *they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever*, Dan. 12. 3. So says he, whose head and whose hair were white like wool, and whose eyes as a flame of fire, to the angel of the church in Smyrna; *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer;—be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*, Rev. 2. 10. *Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Of a truth, I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath*, Luke 12. 42, 43, 44. Once more,

6. God has awfully threatned those who shall be found unfaithful in teaching his word. What a solemn address is that of the Most High to his prophets, Ezek. 33. 7, 8, 9. *So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless,*

vertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul. O! what a powerful incitement should this be to ministers, to see to it, that they be found faithful teachers of the word of God! How should the terrors of the Lord make us afraid of betraying that important trust which we have received! *Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully,* are words, which may justly make the ears of every one that heareth to tingle. With whatever latitude we may be indulged, as to some particular modes, or circumstances that respect religion; we are limited in the most strict, and absolute manner, with respect to the doctrines we are to teach. These must all be taken from the word of God: This must be our only rule, and our only authority. With respect to doctrines, we are not at liberty to consult the taste and dispositions of our people, our own ease and quiet, the authority of men, or any human traditions whatever: All these, when laid together against the pure, and uncorrupted word of God, are not to weigh with us, so much as the empty chaff.

Thus, as we would escape the curses of God, and be pure from the blood of all men, we must let our eyes look right on, and our eye-lids strait before us, to the law and to the testimony: This path we must ponder, without being swayed by any human authority, or sinister views, either to the right hand, or to the left. We must renounce *the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, to command ourselves to every man's conscience.*

And now, what shall we say to these things? To what a solemn, and important work are we who are ministers

ministers of the gospel, called ! What a solemn account will that be, which we must at last give of our stewardship ! I doubt not but that you have anticipated me in these reflections : But they are such as have lain with wait upon my own mind ; and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak. *We* have awful reason to feel the force of them. *We* are placed as watchmen ; our business is to watch for souls : The immortal souls of men are a treasure committed to us ; and if these are lost through our neglect, O ! how shall we lift up our heads, when it will be required of us, *Give an account of your stewardship* ! Must not the hottest place in hell be reserved for unfaithful ministers, in whose skirts shall be found the blood of immortal souls ?

A number of important reflections would naturally arise from the subject we have been upon, to which the time will not permit us to attend. One however, we shall just mention, which is this :

From what has been said, we may infer, that in order to any man's becoming a faithful teacher of God's word, special grace is not only expedient, but *absolutely necessary*. By special grace, I mean that work of the Spirit of God in the heart, by which the man is made *a new creature* ;—by which the old heart is taken away, and a new heart created ;—the natural temper and disposition of the man, destroyed, and a new, spiritual and holy temper ; a temper directly opposite to that which is in man by nature, implanted.

If men are by nature what the bible represents, *enemies to God* ; and not only enemies, but their minds, *enmity itself*, not subject to his law, nor indeed can be, it would seem as if nothing could be more plain, than
that

that such creatures, under the dominion of such tempers, could in no proper sense at all, be faithful to him, with whom they are thus at enmity. Great and wise princes do not think it either prudent for them, or safe for the state, to employ those in the most important places of trust, whom they know to be implacable enemies to them, and most obstinately opposed to their administration. Much less may we suppose that the holy, and allwise Jehovah approves of their being employed as ambassadors for him, who are enemies in their hearts to his character and government. May not those words of the most high, with strict, and awful propriety be here applied? *But unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? What good can be expected will accrue to a state from the administration of those, who are implacable to it's very being? Besides, it has been proved, that fidelity in teaching God's word, implies a supreme regard, therein had to his glory. And if so, does it not evidently appear to be impossible in the nature of things, that it should thus be taught, by one who is an enemy in heart to God, and wholly opposed to his glory and government? Surely a more palpable contradiction cannot be named. That therefore was a most pertinent question, which our Lord so repeatedly put to Simon; Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Previous to the command, feed my sheep, feed my lambs. Hence that exhortation, for substance, so often repeated by the inspired apostle; These things commit thou unto faithful men. Bishops must be blameless. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other mens sins. But I need not enlarge. If fidelity in teaching God's word implies it's being done from a supreme regard to his glory, the inference must be just, and the consequence inevitable; That, in order to any man's becoming a faithful*

faithful teacher of God's word, special grace is absolutely necessary.

One or two short Addresses will conclude the present Discourse. And,

First, To the Church and Congregation, the care of whose souls, has of late been solemnly committed to us.

My dear Brethren,

You readily perceive, from the subject we have been upon, what a solemn and important work you have called us to engage in ! But alas ! who, or what are we, poor earthen vessels, that such an important treasure should be committed to us ! *Who is sufficient for these things ?* may justly be the language of our hearts. For my own part, I can truly say, I have often been astonished, while I have attempted to trace those mysterious footsteps of divine providence, by which I have been led into this near, and important connection with you. I have often, with one, whose praises are still in this Church, been ready to adopt the language of the prophet, "*Lord I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant ; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.*" Of this, I am not without fear, that you may feel the disadvantageous effects. But why should I speak thus ! I hear the solemn reproof ; *Who hath made man's mouth ? Or who maketh the dumb, or the deaf, or the seeing, or the blind ? Have not I the Lord ?*

I should be stupid indeed, if a consideration of the solemn nature of the office which I have undertaken of being made a labourer in the vineyard of Christ, and especially in so important a part as this, did not fill

fill me with anxiety. My solicitude is still increased, when I reflect on the characters of my illustrious predecessors, who have been a succession of lights, that have shone distinguishedly bright, in this candlestick of our Lord Jesus Christ, from it's very beginning.

But it becomes me to take notice of the good hand of God towards *me*, and towards *you*, in that he has not called me alone ; but has provided one, whom, by the unanimous Election of the Church and Congregation, he has joined with me in this arduous and important work ; and one, whom I have so much reason to hope, he designs as a great blessing both to you, and to me. — You have heard something of the solemn obligations that we are under, faithfully to declare to you the *Word of God*. And if we are under obligations thus to teach, the same obligations must lie upon you to hear and attend. You are to take heed, both how you hear, and what you hear. It is not only your privilege, but your indispensable duty to hear and examine for yourselves. Your faith must not stand in the wisdom of men. You are not to receive any doctrines for truths, meerly because they are delivered by us : For you are to be followers of us, so far as we are of Christ, and no farther. As you are not to receive every spirit, so neither every doctrine. As you are required to try the spirits, so you are required to try the doctrines which we deliver : Bring them to the infallible test, *the law and the testimony* : try them by this rule : If we speak not according to this word, believe us not, neither bid us God speed. — But then remember, that as we are to teach, so you are to hear and judge, as those who must give an account. Remember, that if we do faithfully declare to you the counsel of God, and you, through prejudice, or opposition of heart to the truth, reject it ; you do it at your peril.

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And now, my dear Brethren, let me earnestly intreat your ardent and daily prayers to the God of all grace, who holds the stars in his right hand, that he would grant unto us much of the teaching of his holy Spirit,—enrich us with every christian, and ministerial grace, and thoroughly furnish us unto this great work, whereto, in his Providence, he has given us a Call :—That we may be found faithful to him that hath called us, faithful to you, and to our own souls. We need your prayers. We are poor, weak, polluted creatures ; called to a great and important work ; a work that might employ all the talents of an Arch-angel. We have no sufficiency of ourselves. You are sensible that we are men of like passions with you ; subject to like temptations, and in many respects, to much greater than others.

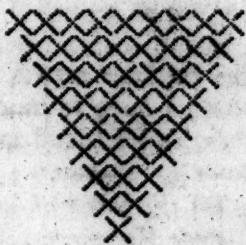
I trust there are a goodly number who have been wrestling at the throne of grace for us. O ! continue to wrestle ; and as Princes may you have power with God, and prevail !

Finally. Permit me in one word to address myself to you, dear Sir, my companion and fellow-labourer in this arduous and important work, to which God, in his providence, has given us a mutual call.

It is with pleasure I consider myself thus nearly connected with one, whom I have so much reason to expect will be a Brother, and a friend indeed. May we live together, and love like brethren ; bear each others burdens ; and so fulfill the law of Christ. Let us, in the bowels of our dear Redeemer, watch over, and pray much for each other, and for this Church, which has been committed to our charge. May we always take heed to ourselves, to our doctrine, and to all the flock

Stock over which we are made Overseers ; to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. *May we, who have God's word, speak that word faithfully. May we study to shew ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* May we boldly declare the whole counsel of God,—live as examples of the believers ; that so we may be clear from the blood of all men, and able at last, to render to the great Shepherd and Bishop of his Church, a good account of our stewardship. And may this Church, under our mutual care and watch, be established and built up on the most holy faith,—fed with knowledge and with understanding, and filled with all the fullness of God. Which, may God of his boundless mercy grant, for the sake of that blood which was shed for the priesthood and the people !

AMEN and AMEN.



N. B. Page 14. line 8. for *delightly*, read *delighted*.

